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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TBILISI 001078

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [KBTS](#) [UNSC](#) [UNOMIG](#) [RS](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: GEORGIA: DIPLOMATIC PARTNERS DISCUSS UNOMIG WITH
A/S GORDON

REF: A. TBILISI 1073
[1](#)B. STATE 59890
[1](#)C. USUN 583
[1](#)D. TBILISI 984

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tfft for Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. In a June 11 meeting with European ambassadors and heads of the three monitoring missions, EUR Assistant Secretary Philip Gordon reviewed the state of UNOMIG renewal negotiations and possible ways forward. Everyone agreed that losing UNOMIG had potentially serious disadvantages for Georgia, but protecting key principles -- notably the international community's explicit affirmation of Georgian territorial integrity -- was also important. Although the meeting participants did not fully agree on just how much of a risk the closure of UNOMIG presented, they did agree that Georgia must ultimately be allowed to make the final decision on what was acceptable -- and that Russia must be blamed for a failure to achieve a new resolution. Although some argued for continuing to try to reach a compromise, all recognized that a deal was unlikely, and a technical rollover might be the best hope at this point. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Participants in the meeting with A/S Gordon and Ambassador Tfft included the following: British Ambassador Denis Keefe; French Ambassador Eric Fournier; German Ambassador Patricia Flor; Head of the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) Hansjoerg Haber; OSCE Deputy Head of Mission Gottfried Hanne; and UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Johan Verbeke.

IF UNOMIG GOES, WHAT DO WE LOSE?

[1](#)3. (C) To begin, A/S Gordon asked his colleagues what Georgia would lose if the UN mission closed down. SRSG Verbeke answered first, saying that the single most significant feature of UNOMIG is the signal it sends to the world that Georgia still has an unresolved conflict. If UNOMIG closes, the rest of the world could pay less and less attention to Georgia's concerns over time. Although he admitted that the UN had done little to resolve the conflict in its fifteen years of existence, he said that closure might send the (incorrect) message that the conflict had finally been resolved -- and this was precisely the impression the Russians wanted to convey. Ambassador Flor echoed this point, also seeing great symbolic value in the very existence of UNOMIG.

[1](#)4. (C) Several interlocutors expressed concern about the impact on the local population, in particular in Gali. Ambassador Flor noted that another exodus of newly displaced persons into undisputed Georgian territory was possible; Ambassador Keefe expressed the same concern. Keefe acknowledged, however, that there was some debate on the

extent of the threat, especially considering that the local population faces difficulties even with a UN presence. Ambassador Tefft pointed out that in the past, many Gali residents had left for undisputed Georgia, then returned, suggesting that it is difficult to predict just how the locals will react. Flor added that a UN departure would also close one of the few windows we have on the situation inside Abkhazia, so that it would be far more difficult to stay informed about the true state of affairs.

15. (C) Ambassador Keefe also said that closure would put Georgia and Russia in more of a direct confrontation and would risk upsetting what he called a "delicate balance" between the sides. He suggested that the Georgians, with their absolute focus on protecting the principle of territorial integrity, might not fully appreciate all the possible ramifications of a UN departure. A/S Gordon and Ambassador Tefft responded that their conversations with the Georgians on the topic, in which they pushed the Georgians on this very point, had convinced them that the Georgians had indeed thought the issue through quite thoroughly (ref A). Keefe also noted that a UN departure could jeopardize such international structures as the Geneva process; EUMM Head Haber echoed this concern, pointing to the Joint Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism as another potential casualty.

DO WE GAIN ANYTHING -- OR AT LEAST NOT LOSE TOO MUCH?

16. (C) Even while enumerating the potential disadvantages of a UN departure, SRSV Verbeke also noted that there might be some advantages as well. In particular, he said that

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cancelling the mission -- especially considering the kind of language that Russia was likely to demand -- would avoid legitimizing the Russian presence inside Abkhazia. Ambassador Fournier did not say that a closure would have advantages, but he did downplay the disadvantages, suggesting it would not be the end of the world. He shared a message sent to French officials around the world from President Sarkozy, in which Sarkozy said that defending core principles, in particular territorial integrity, was the most important thing. Sarkozy suggested that UNOMIG should be seen "not as a jewel, but a tool" -- a potentially useful one, but not an end in itself.

17. (C) EUMM Head Haber said that, from the perspective of the EUMM, the departure of UNOMIG would not actually change too much on the ground. He said that at that point the EUMM would become first and foremost a tripwire. A/S Gordon asked whether the EUMM would in fact stay if the UN left; Haber said it certainly would in the short- to medium-term. He said it would be important, however, for the EU to avoid making long-term commitments in order to keep both the Georgian and the Russian sides honest. In his view, one of the EUMM's biggest contributions is its firm policy of non-recognition of the territories, which will not change and which does not require any concessions by Georgia. In other words, although Georgia would likely have to make certain concessions to keep a UN presence, it does not have to make any to keep the EUMM.

WHAT NEXT?

18. (C) Ambassadors Flor and Keefe both advocated for continuing to push for an acceptable substantive resolution. They both acknowledged that reaching a compromise text that all sides -- including both the Russians and the Georgians -- could accept would be difficult, but they both felt strongly that the risks of losing UNOMIG were considerable, and all parties should therefore make every effort to find a solution. SRSV Verbeke suggested that it was possible to protect basic principles and renew the mission; in fact, he said, salvaging the mission would itself support those same

principles, because the existence of the mission sends a strong message on the unresolved nature of Georgia's territorial conflicts. Acknowledging the Georgians' legitimate concern about maintaining the UNSC's commitment to the country's territorial integrity, Verbeke said that, although the Russians would certainly not accept a direct reference to territorial integrity, they might accept an indirect one via reference to UNSC Resolution 1808.

¶9. (C) A/S Gordon said that, even if the Russians were to accept a reference to 1808, the acceptability of a resolution would also depend on what else it contained, noting for example the Georgians' interest in references to the Sarkozy agreements. SRS Verbeke and Ambassador Flor offered a note of caution on that point, explaining that in their draft the Russians had finessed those reference very cleverly. Thus, if their text survived, the Russians could argue that compliance with the ceasefire and its implementing measures could be considered not the primary benchmark, but only one of several -- and thereby maintain a position that it is in compliance with the resolution and mandate (if not with the ceasefire).

¶10. (C) All participants, including Flor and Keefe, agreed Q10. (C) All participants, including Flor and Keefe, agreed that ultimately the Georgians must be the ones to decide if a mandate is acceptable or not, and all parties should respect Georgia's decision. A/S Gordon and Ambassador Fournier also argued strongly for the importance of putting the blame for a failed negotiation on the Russians, and everyone agreed. Fournier noted that this point had been part of Sarkozy's message to French officials. A/S Gordon said that the worst case scenario would be a strenuous effort on the part of western partners to find language acceptable to the Russians, but which the Georgians decided they could not accept: then the Georgians would be isolated, the Russians would perceive that the international community is prepared to bend over backwards to please them, and last but not least, there would be no UN mission.

¶11. (C) All participants agreed that achieving a text acceptable to both Georgia and Russia at this point was unlikely, and another technical rollover may therefore be the best we can hope for. SRS Verbeke noted that technical rollovers are not historically used for extended periods of time -- and at seven months and counting, UNOMIG's ongoing technical extensions are therefore a historical achievement. Everyone also agreed that even a technical rollover text

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would require at least a reference to UNSC Resolution 1808, as the previous two resolutions have had, but it was not clear that the Russians would accept such a reference.

¶12. (C) A/S Gordon suggested that, if the UN mission in Georgia does close, the international community might need to get creative about maintaining its attention to the situation. He proposed that the partners consider making a coordinated effort to raise Georgia in the UNSC every year anyway, even if a mission is lacking, as a way to keep the conflicts on the world's front burner. EUMM Head Haber agreed with this approach, saying that the EU will do so anyway in its periodic reviews of the EUMM. Verbeke cautioned that adding a new item every year to the UNSC agenda was not so easy, but Ambassador Tefft thought that the Georgians themselves would find a way to keep everyone's attention.

¶13. (U) A/S Gordon did not have the opportunity to review this telegram prior to his departure.
TEFFT